



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 12 January 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters,¹ Completing our reflection on Mary at the end of the series of catecheses devoted to the Father, today we want to stress her role in our journey to the Father. He himself desired Mary's presence in salvation history. When he decided to send his Son into the world, he wanted him to come to us by being born of a woman (cf. *Gal* 4: 4). Thus he willed that this woman, the first to receive his Son, should communicate him to all humanity. Mary is therefore found on the path that leads from the Father to humanity as the mother who gives the Saviour Son to all. At the same time, she is on the path that human beings must take in order to go to the Father through Christ in the Spirit (cf. *Eph* 2: 18).² To understand Mary's presence on our journey to the Father, we must recognize with all the Churches that Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14: 6) and the only Mediator between God and men (cf. *1 Tm* 2: 5). Mary is involved in Christ's unique mediation and is totally at its service. Consequently, as the Council stressed in *Lumen gentium*: "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power" (n. 60). In no way do we state that Mary has a role in the Church's life apart from Christ's mediation or alongside it, as if it were a parallel or competing mediation.

As I expressly said in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, Mary's maternal mediation "is mediation *in* Christ" (n. 38). The Council explains: "The Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but, on the contrary, fosters it" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 60). Mary too was redeemed by Christ and is indeed the first of the redeemed, since the grace granted to her by God the Father at the beginning of her existence is owed to "the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race", as affirmed by the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pius IX (DS 2803). All of Mary's cooperation in salvation is founded on Christ's mediation, which, as the Council clearly states, "does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 62). Viewed in this way, Mary's mediation appears as the most sublime fruit of Christ's mediation and is essentially directed to bringing us into a more intimate and profound encounter with him: "The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary, which

she constantly experiences and recommends to the heartfelt attention of the faithful, so that, encouraged by this maternal help, they may more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer" (ibid.).³ Mary, in fact, does not want to draw attention to herself. She lived on earth with her gaze fixed on Jesus and the heavenly Father. Her greatest desire is to focus everyone's attention in the same direction. She wants to encourage a vision of faith and hope in the Saviour sent to us by the Father. Her gaze of faith and hope was particularly exemplary when, in the turmoil of her Son's passion, she kept in her heart a total faith in him and in the Father. While the disciples were bewildered by the events and their faith deeply shaken, Mary, although tried by sorrow, remained completely certain that Jesus' prediction would be fulfilled: "The Son of man ... will be raised on the third day" (*Mt 17: 22-23*). A certitude that never left her, even when she held in her arms the lifeless body of her crucified son.⁴ With this vision of faith and hope, Mary encourages the Church and believers always to fulfil the Father's will revealed to us by Christ. What she told the servants for the miracle at Cana reverberates for every generation of Christians: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn 2: 5*).

Her advice was followed when the servants filled the jars to the brim. Mary addresses the same invitation to us. She urges us to enter this new period of history with the intention of carrying out whatever Christ said in the Gospel on the Father's behalf and now intimates to us through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. If we do what Christ tells us, the millennium now begun can take on a new aspect, one more evangelical and authentically Christian, and thus fulfil Mary's deepest longing.⁵ The words "Do whatever he tells you" direct us to Christ, but they also remind us that we are on our way to the Father. They coincide with the Father's voice heard on the mount of the Transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son ... listen to him" (*Mt 17: 5*). This same Father, through the word of Christ and the light of the Holy Spirit, calls us, guides us and waits for us. Our holiness consists in doing everything the Father tells us. And this is the value of Mary's life: the fulfilment of God's will. Accompanied and supported by Mary, we gratefully receive the new millennium from the Father's hands and commit ourselves to responding to its grace with humble and generous devotion.* * *I warmly greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present, especially those from Norway, Japan and the United States of America. I entrust you and your families to the protection of Mary, who is "a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God" (*Lumen gentium*, 68), and I invoke upon you the abundant blessings of Almighty God. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana